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Where Wylie Ends

Richard Hugo

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The earth out here doesn't bear us
up so much as it keeps us out,
an old trick of the beautiful.
Remember what Chief Left Hand said?
Never mind. Everything else
was taken from him,
let's leave his grief alone.
My eastern friends ask me

how I like it in the west,
or God's country, as it's sometimes
called, though God, like a slumlord,
lives in the suburbs: Heaven.
And I don't live "in the west";
I live in this canyon among a few
other houses and abandoned
mines, vaccinations that didn't take.

Where Wylie Ends / Richard Hugo

Our road ends near stars.
The stream flows counter to our road.
Dogs howl at the end of the road
in the woods where people howl.
Beyond the woods other roads end.
Not our road. Our road ends
near stars and howling dogs,
near water going the other way.
Their roads end going the same way
as water, going away from stars.
Dogs howl at the end of their roads
in the woods where people howl.
Same dogs, Same people. Same howls.
The howling people have no road.
They howl in the woods with dogs.
The woods has roads. The howls
find trails that lead to roads.
The howling people have joined us

on the road, moving with, moving
counter to water. Stars
pale like dog howls in dawn.
Where our road ends, people
from the woods ask the way home.
Our road moves with the water.
Both carry stars to our lawn.

Ricky / Philip Levine

I go into the back yard
and arrange some twigs
and a few flowers. I go alone
and speak to you as I never could
when you lived, when you
smiled back at me shyly.
Now I can talk to you as I talked
to a star when I was a boy,
expecting no answer, as I talked
to my father who had become
the wind, particles of rain
and fire, these few twigs
and flowers that have no name.

*

Last night they said a rosary
and my boys went, awkward
in slacks and sport shirts,
and later sitting under the hidden
stars they were attacked and beaten.
You are dead, and a nameless rage
is loose. It is 105,
the young and the old burn
in the fields, and though they cry
enough the sun hangs on
bloodying the dust above the aisles
of cotton and grape.